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**PREPARING FOR A NORTH KOREAN REFUGEE CRISIS**

**By**

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**A paper submitted to the faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.**

**The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.**

## **ABSTRACT**

Should a catastrophe occur in North Korea, millions of North Korean refugees would scatter throughout Northeast Asia. As a consequence, an operational plan that addresses a North Korean refugee crisis must be in place. While some would argue that a refugee crisis is largely a South Korean problem, it is a global problem that requires a coordinated international response. As lead executive agent for the United Nations in maintaining the armistice, the United States is the necessary leader in preparing for this potential disaster. Therefore, this paper recommends that the United Nations Command, with a resident Multinational Interagency Group, be the lead organization to coordinate a response. It stresses the need for early coordination amongst all participating nations, militaries and civilian agencies, and development of an operational level framework to mitigate the challenges of being overwhelmed when the crisis is at hand. It attempts to provide military planners with a view of what this mission would entail, the complicating factors surrounding it, and an appropriate command structure to facilitate a response.

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## INTRODUCTION

On the Korean peninsula, the Cold War continues to dominate the landscape. For over a half-century the Republic of Korea (ROK) and United States Combined Forces Command (CFC) have planned various military contingencies and remain poised to handle several potential outcomes. These outcomes are best described by experts as scenarios that include integration and peaceful unification, collapse and absorption of the North, and unification through conflict.<sup>1</sup> It is difficult to determine which and when any of these scenarios would occur. With a population of over twenty-three million people in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), a refugee problem is likely to result in any of these scenarios, and may even occur prior to the initiation of any of these scenarios.<sup>2</sup> As a consequence, an operational plan that addresses a North Korean refugee crisis must be in place. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) currently estimates between 50,000-250,000 North Koreans as "internally displaced persons" (IDP) due to government repression and famine.<sup>3</sup> Should a catastrophe occur in North Korea, over 150,000 to 200,000 refugees would likely flee to China, three million would flee to South Korea, 100,000 – 150,000 to Japan, with tens of thousands more to Russia and other countries.<sup>4</sup>

A refugee crisis on the Korean peninsula would be an international problem with global ramifications. While some would argue that this is largely a ROK problem, it is a much larger problem that requires a coordinated international response. As lead executive agent for the United

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<sup>1</sup> Jonathan D. Pollack and Chung Min Lee, *Preparing for Korean Unification* (Santa Monica: Rand, 1999), 49-80.

<sup>2</sup> Central Intelligence Agency (updated 17 April 2007). "North Korea." *The World Factbook*. <https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/print/kn.html> (accessed 20 April 2007).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Jeong-Ju Na, "3 Million NK refugees expected in crisis: BOK," *Korea Times*, 26 January 2007, [http://search.hankooki.com/times/times\\_view.php?term=north+korea++&path=hankooki3/times/lpage/200701/kt2007012618090610160.htm&media=kt](http://search.hankooki.com/times/times_view.php?term=north+korea++&path=hankooki3/times/lpage/200701/kt2007012618090610160.htm&media=kt) (accessed 24 April 2007). ; "Japan and U.S. working on North Korea emergency plan," *Terra Daily*, 5 January 2007, [http://www.terradaily.com/reports/Japan\\_And\\_US\\_Working\\_On\\_North\\_Korea\\_Emergency\\_Plan\\_999.html](http://www.terradaily.com/reports/Japan_And_US_Working_On_North_Korea_Emergency_Plan_999.html) (accessed 16 April 2007).

Nations (UN) in maintaining the armistice, the United States is the necessary leader in preparing for this potential disaster. Therefore, this paper will recommend that the United Nations Command (UNC), with a resident Multinational Interagency Group (MIG), be the lead organization to coordinate a response. It stresses the need for early coordination amongst all participating nations, militaries and civilian agencies, and development of an operational level framework to mitigate the challenges of being overwhelmed when the crisis is at hand. It attempts to provide military planners with a view of what this mission would entail, the complicating factors surrounding it, and an appropriate command structure to facilitate a response.

### **AN INTERNATIONAL PROBLEM**

Northeast Asia is a strategic and highly dynamic region that is an integral part of global politics and economics. U.S. trade with the region alone accounted for 24 percent of all of its international trade in 2006.<sup>5</sup> The security of this region is therefore essential to maintaining a vibrant global economy. The 2006 National Security Strategy states that the “U.S. is a Pacific nation, with extensive interests throughout East and Southeast Asia. The region’s stability and prosperity depend on our sustained engagement...”<sup>6</sup> At the same time, it could also be one of the most vulnerable regions in the world due to the potential actions and consequences of the DPRK.

DPRK counterfeits currency, traffics in narcotics and engages in other illicit activities; threatens the ROK with its army and its neighbors with its missiles; and brutalizes and starves its people. The DPRK regime needs to change these policies, open up its political system, and afford freedom to its people. In the interim, we will continue to take all necessary measures to protect our national and economic security against the adverse effects of their bad conduct.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> House Armed Services Committee, “Statement of General B.B. Bell, Commander, United Nations Command; Commander, Republic of Korea-United States Combined Forces Command; and Commander, United States Forces Korea, before the House Armed Services Committee,” 7 March 2007, [http://www.usfk.mil/org/FKPA/sptr/contents/3\\_7\\_07\\_HASC%20Posture%20Statement.pdf](http://www.usfk.mil/org/FKPA/sptr/contents/3_7_07_HASC%20Posture%20Statement.pdf) (accessed April 22, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> U.S. President, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: White House, 2006): 40.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

According to Robert Kaplan, “what terrifies South Koreans more than North Korean missiles are North Korean refugees pouring south and the instability this would trigger. The Chinese, for their part, have nightmare visions of millions of North Korean refugees heading north over the Yalu River into Manchuria.”<sup>8</sup> Northeast Asia has thus far been spared a major humanitarian crisis, unlike other regions around the world. Arguably, a crisis on the Korean peninsula would devastate the region and have political, military, and economic repercussions around the globe.

The United States, ROK, China, Japan, and Russia would be the primary stakeholders in this crisis because of their close proximity to North Korea, their current relationships with North Korea, and/or their contributions in establishing the 1953 armistice on the Korean Peninsula. Of these entities, the ROK and the U.S. have taken the most active interest in the refugee issue. The ROK currently welcomes both North Korean refugees and defectors and has various programs to integrate them into South Korean society in a controlled, but limited scale. Recently, the United States passed the North Korean Refugee Act of 2004, a substantial piece of legislation that signaled America’s commitment to refugees. This legislation lays the groundwork for United States assistance by addressing North Korean refugee issues in three specific ways: (1) appropriating up to two million dollars annually to promote human rights by radio broadcasting to North Korea; (2) appropriating up to twenty million dollars per year to assist North Koreans in need; and (3) protecting North Koreans through eligibility for refugee or asylum consideration.<sup>9</sup> The document is a good start in raising situational awareness to the plight of refugee to American citizens and to the world community, but does not address who would respond to a crisis and how.

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<sup>8</sup> Robert D. Kaplan, “When North Korea Falls,” *The Atlantic Monthly* 298, no. 3, October 2006, 66. <http://www.ebsco.com> (accessed 16 April 2007).

<sup>9</sup> House. *North Korean Human Rights Act of 2004*, 108th Cong., 2nd sess., 20 January 2004, HR 4011.

## THE MISSION

In general, a military force is capable of performing a vital role in pre-crisis planning and humanitarian relief during the early stages of a North Korean refugee crisis. However, the military should not be expected to manage the full spectrum of humanitarian operations. There are international organizations with the passion, resources and expertise who are better suited for the task. The mission sets for the military should be limited to responsibilities inherent to first responders. This includes providing initial life-saving efforts; rescue at sea operations; border security and integrity; dislocated civilian support; emergency medical care; and distribution of initial relief supplies.<sup>10</sup> The military would also provide the most critical and complicated aspect of a North Korean refugee response - command and control organization and structures to facilitate such an effort. Once there is stability, security, and some semblance of order, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) would then take the lead.

It is widely recognized that in any civil-military coordination, NGOs must retain the lead role in undertaking and directing humanitarian operations. For example, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNCHA) advocates that “the independence of humanitarian action and decision-making must be preserved both at the operational and policy levels at all times.”<sup>11</sup> No matter how well this concept is understood, a crisis on the Korean peninsula poses an interesting challenge because it is highly probable that humanitarian assistance operations would be conducted concurrently with military operations should instability or collapse of the North Korean regime occur or conflict arise. This is why a North Korean refugee crisis would naturally involve the military taking the lead and managing the initial onslaught of refugees.

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<sup>10</sup> Chairman, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Foreign Humanitarian Assistance, Joint Publication (JP) 3.07-6 (Washington, DC: CJCS, 15 August 2001), I-4.

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Department of the Navy, *Civil-Military Relationship in Complex Emergencies: An ISAC Reference Paper*. (Newport, RI: United States Naval War College, 28 June 2005), 9.



The U.S. military has traditionally viewed foreign humanitarian assistance (FHA) operations with skepticism because it is a mission area that has, until recently, been outside the scope of its mission.<sup>12</sup> The military prefers to have clear military objectives tied to national desired end states where success is tangible to some degree. Additionally, terms frequently heard in national security policy circles such as “mission creep” and “exit strategy” make these types of missions less desirable.<sup>13</sup> Despite this perspective, FHA operations have become a growing undertaking under the purview of the armed services. Operation UNIFIED ASSISTANCE, a sea-based approach to providing assistance to the people of Indonesia after the devastating tsunami in 2004, is the most recent and just one of many examples of the military providing humanitarian assistance and becoming an apparatus to coordinate the efforts of foreign militaries and NGOs.<sup>14</sup> Several lessons from this experience can be learned and applied directly to a North Korean refugee crisis response.

### **COMPLICATING FACTORS SURROUNDING THE MISSION**

The refugee crisis in North Korea poses unique challenges that are unparalleled on different scales versus other humanitarian missions. At the national-strategic level, the situation is unique because of the countries – or interested parties – involved. Each country (the United States, South Korea, China, and Japan) define and view North Korean “refugees” differently. The United States - and a large part of the international community - view North Koreans according to the legal definition of “refugee,” and as such, insist these individuals have certain basic and legal protections.<sup>15</sup> Many South Koreans feel a closer affinity to their counterparts in the North because of historical blood ties, although a large number are now a generation or two removed. Coordination

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<sup>12</sup> John E. Lange, “Civilian-Military Cooperation Assistance: Lessons from Rwanda,” *U.S. Army War College Quarterly*/XXVIII, no. 2 (Summer 1998): 106-122.

<sup>13</sup> Andrew S. Natsios, “Commander’s guidance: A Challenge of Complex Humanitarian Emergencies,” *U.S. Army War College Quarterly*/XXVI, no. 2 (Summer 1996): 50-66.

<sup>14</sup> Bruce A. Elleman, “*Waves of Hope: The U.S. Navy’s Response to the Tsunami in Northern Indonesia*,” (Newport, RI: Naval War College Press, 2007): 9.

<sup>15</sup> House. *North Korean Human Rights Act of 2004*, HR 4011.

may become more complicated depending on China's acceptance of refugees, which it has been reluctant to do so. Also, China does not regard North Koreans as "refugees," but as "illegal economic migrants," thereby excluding certain privileges given to other refugees.<sup>16</sup> Getting China to recognize these refugees will take considerable diplomatic pressure from the U.S. Department of State, the UN, and from the international community.

Regional politics also play a part and should be considered. China, a country with longstanding ties to North Korea, already has North Korean refugees residing within the country and shares a significant border with North Korea. They have a major interest in the outcome of such a crisis, but may choose not to participate in a ROK or U.S. led endeavor because of their uneasiness that American forces could possibly end up along the Yalu River and diminish China's influence in the region.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, South Korea does not want Chinese troops entering North Korea because of continued concerns of possible Chinese territorial ambitions.<sup>18</sup> In addition, recent attempts by China to distort Korean history by laying claims to the ancient Koguryo Dynasty are sparking considerable levels of concern and a rise of nationalism in the ROK.<sup>19</sup>

To avoid lingering contentious issues, it is important that a regional agreement provide a clear mandate on what the mission would entail. This agreement should include an operational level framework to include clear rules of engagement for the military, refugee status for fleeing North Koreans, logistics, legal, communications architecture, and media issues. In Operation UNIFIED ASSISTANCE humanitarian assistance operations in Indonesia were severely limited by an absence of regional agreements and communications networks between foreign militaries, NGOs

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<sup>16</sup> Mikyoung Kim, "Beijing's Hot Potato: North Korean Refugees and Human Rights Debates," *China Brief* V, no. 1 (1 March 2005), [http://www.jamestown.org/publications\\_details.php?volume\\_id=408&issue\\_id=3246&article\\_id=2369336](http://www.jamestown.org/publications_details.php?volume_id=408&issue_id=3246&article_id=2369336) (accessed 20 April 2007).

<sup>17</sup> Kaplan, 66-68.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 68-69.

<sup>19</sup> Bruce Klingner, "China Shock for South Korea." *Asia Times*, 11 September 2004, <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Korea/FI11Dg03.html> (accessed 20 April 2007).

and international governmental organizations (IGO).<sup>20</sup> Early coordination amongst regional partners will be essential in enabling operational commanders to execute their missions.

At the operational level, unique challenges will be encountered based on where refugees decide to flee to and how many arrive in a given area. Vastly different physical and political obstacles await refugees whether they decide to flee north to China or Russia, into heavily defended South Korea, to the Yellow or East Seas, or beyond. Therefore, the resources needed to assist the refugees will be different, and the response in these different environments will most definitely occur simultaneously. For refugees attempting to flee to Japan, the dangerous and risky effort to traverse the high seas will be problematic and will require a largely naval response. In South Korea, an influx of desperate refugees attempting to cross a heavily mined and protected de-militarized zone, as well as along both coastlines, will involve large land, naval, and medical forces. For China, the largest problem will be the fact that its borders are both porous and vast. Military planners will have to provide flexible options to address each of these potential contingencies.

A calculated response to all of these outcomes will help define the requirements of such a humanitarian assistance mission. This mission would welcome coalition partners and would be multi-service in nature. If countries such as China become a part of a lead nation or parallel command structure, how would they be integrated? Also, the sheer number of IGOs and NGOs from the international community and South Korea are daunting.

In Operation UNIFIED ASSISTANCE the U.S. Pacific Command (USPACOM) established Combined Support Force 536 (CSF 536), a collection point of IGOs and NGOs.<sup>21</sup> Large numbers of responders arrived from different countries, and these agencies were independent in nature. The horizontal command and control structure at CSF 536 allowed for different support agencies to

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<sup>20</sup> Elleman, 95.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 8.

“come and go” to complete their desired goals. They did not command other nation’s units, but facilitated their efforts by providing a single coordination center and enabling some degree of unity of effort. As a result, a rigid command structure to respond to a humanitarian crisis on the Korean peninsula would not be ideal, as participating nations such as the United States., China, and ROK are unlikely to subordinate their units to each other.

Since North Korea is a totally isolated state, it is difficult to ascertain or gauge the magnitude of such a crisis, the condition and numbers of refugees, or the desperate state of these individuals. On the ground, refugee reactions to responders providing assistance may pose serious security challenges. During the great famine in the mid-1990’s, where an estimated 2.5 million North Koreans perished, South Korean intelligence reported civil unrest, an attempted coup, sabotage of government factories and railroads, and the attack on homes of officials for personal vengeance in one northeastern town.<sup>22</sup> Additionally, North Korean citizens have been at war with South Korea for over fifty years and have been heavily indoctrinated into believing South Korea and the United States are the enemy. With this in mind, national-strategic leaders must take into account how humanitarian efforts would be accepted by North Koreans.

Lastly, it is uncertain what might trigger a refugee crisis. Internal strife, a coup or civil insurrection, or continuing starvation could be indicators of an impending crisis. Because the DPRK has been a secretive state, scantily available military intelligence and reports from NGOs already working with refugees on the China-DPRK border will have to be weighed heavily in deciding when and how to initiate a response. Operation UNIFIED ASSISTANCE is a recent example that shows how a number of foreign countries successfully provided humanitarian assistance concurrently - without ceding away their autonomy – and also distanced themselves from civil matters once the

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<sup>22</sup> Andrew S. Natsios, *The Great North Korean Famine* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2001), 217-220.

mission was accomplished.<sup>23</sup> As such, there were no recorded instances of locals clashing with foreign providers. In a North Korea refugee crisis, whether or not the North Korean government is still intact, foreign military forces may physically be unwelcome inside North Korea. To mitigate any blue-on-white situation, minimizing the military “footprint” in support of humanitarian operations would be the preferred method. South Korean forces, who share the culture and language, and other IGO/NGOs, should be the ones entering North Korea.

### **POSSIBLE COMMAND STRUCTURES**

Four possible command structures require fuller examination: a China led effort, a United States led effort, a ROK led effort, and a UNC led effort. These arrangements were selected based on existing command and control structures already in place, the will to navigate through political and diplomatic obstacles, the ability to garner resources, and their ability and experience to work with coalition partners in a joint environment.

China as Lead Nation - China could be a key player in such a crisis and a remote possibility does exist for them to lead this type of effort. UN statistics show that as of 2005, China was the world’s largest contributor to UN peacekeeping operations.<sup>24</sup> Additionally, they mobilized more than 300,000 personnel, 12,500 vehicles, 1,170 boats and ships, and over 200 aircraft, in response to flood relief efforts in 1998.<sup>25</sup> However, their lack of experience in leading a large coalition and joint force and visible absence in large-scale international humanitarian relief operations, are glaring disadvantages that may preclude them from such a task. The only documented coalition exercises noting their participation are elementary level search and rescue drills with the United States., Japan and South Korea. Although not a large scale exercise, China participated in a combined United States – PRC search and rescue exercise off the coast of San Diego in 2006. One naval officer had

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<sup>23</sup> Elleman, 37.

<sup>24</sup> Dennis J. Blasko, *The Chinese Army Today* (London: Routledge, 2006), 178.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 175.

three key observations about the Chinese naval surface group, which consisted of a frigate and an oiler. First, the leadership did not ask any questions regarding the coordination or safety of the exercise during the pre-exercise brief. Secondly, the admiral was the clearing authority for launching of the helicopter, which normally resides with the individual ship's commanding officer in other navies. Finally, their actions pertaining to rescue efforts – a critical part of the exercise - were slow. One can only conclude that this was due to their lack of experience in even the most basic of naval operations and their reluctance to lose face if the exercise was not successful.<sup>26</sup> This is only one observation, but if it is an indication of larger issues within the Chinese military, it is safe to assume they would not be a leading candidate to lead an international response for a refugee crisis.

United States as Lead Nation - The United States has the most capacity to be the lead nation. USPACOM already enjoys the cooperation of many countries in the Pacific Rim and maintains a number of strong bilateral military arrangements. United States Forces Korea (USFK), a sub-unified command under USPACOM, has commanded the U.S.-ROK CFC for over fifty years and currently has twenty-seven thousand military personnel on the Korean peninsula. They can generate significant naval and air forces to support the effort. Additionally, the United States would most likely be the largest contributor of monetary aid. Japan, another potential monetary contributor, would even benefit from this construct because of its close ties with the United States. A United States led effort would certainly take into account Japan's concerns about refugees heading to Japan in significant numbers.

Why should the United States not be in charge of executing such a mission? A United States led effort would create concerns, especially from China, of greater U.S. influence and hegemony in the region. A United States led effort may even tarnish its strong alliance with the ROK, who are trying to gain wartime control of their forces, assume a more equal relationship with the United

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<sup>26</sup> Duane Lambert, interview by the author, 1 May 2007.

States, and assert a more independent role in the region. A United States led mission would give the ROK the perception they are not equal partners, and their strategic interests would not adequately be taken into account. Such divergence can be viewed in light of advocates in the United States calling for regime change in North Korea, while other key countries such as South Korea and China - are vehemently against it. As Dr. Linton of the Eugene Bell Foundation states, “China doesn’t want a refugee flow, and South Korea doesn’t want to support the entire North Korean population.”<sup>27</sup> A strictly United States led effort may not provide a conducive environment for maximum participation from the ROK.

South Korea as Lead Nation - A ROK led effort would have legitimacy as the country shares a common history and lineage with North Koreans. They possess blood ties, a common language, and a shared culture to facilitate the needs of refugees. They have sufficient forces already in place to seal their borders and coastlines. As the tenth largest economy in the world, the ROK is better off than most nations around the world to provide a national response to such a crisis. South Koreans are the biggest stakeholders in this effort and have a series of national contingency plans in the North called “Chungmoo Plans.” For instance, Chungmoo 3300 is a contingency plan to respond to a refugee crisis and mass migration.”<sup>28</sup> However, the ROK cannot handle the crisis alone. At a minimum, they must involve the United States and China.

At the operational level, command and control structures on the peninsula will adapt to reflect the ROK obtaining wartime control of their own forces from the United States by 2012. This process will take time and substantial effort. The focus of the ROK military will undoubtedly be

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<sup>27</sup> Nathan C. Strauss, “North Korean Regime Sturdy,” *The Harvard Crimson*, 31 October 2006, <http://www.thecrimson.com/article.aspx?ref=515382> (accessed 16 April 2007).

<sup>28</sup> William M Arkin, “Taking pre-emptive action against North Korea.” *Washington Post*, blog entry posted 27 October 2006. [http://blog.washingtonpost.com/earlywarning/2006/10/taking\\_preemptive\\_action\\_again.html](http://blog.washingtonpost.com/earlywarning/2006/10/taking_preemptive_action_again.html) (accessed 20 April 2007).

directed towards a response to a collapse of the DPRK regime or a conflict on the peninsula. They may not be well positioned to lead an international effort in response to a refugee crisis.

Politics would also be a hindrance in a ROK led effort. Seoul's constant balancing act with North Korea and China in an effort to maintain peace and stability on the peninsula makes them an ineffective agent to deal with tough issues that will arise in this type of planning effort.<sup>29</sup> This can be seen in how they deal with North Korean refugees going to third-party nations like China, Japan, etc., and their difficulty in brokering deals with China for the return of many imprisoned citizens attempting to help the plight of the refugees. Harnessing international support would be a challenge for the ROK, especially when one of the largest donors could be Japan, a longtime Korean adversary. The ROK is capable of leading the effort, but it is questionable whether they broaden international participation, and respectively, receive the amount of global support that this type of crisis would deem necessary.

UN Led Effort - A UN led effort would be the most legitimate and most feasible command structure. The UNC already exists as a force enabler, and a planning effort to respond to a North Korean refugee crisis would rejuvenate coordination amongst the fifteen nations already involved with maintaining the armistice. It would empower and reaffirm the legitimacy of the command, especially with its role possibly being diminished as the ROK gains wartime control of their forces and as the United States ponders diplomatic normalization with the DPRK. As lead executive agent for the UNC in Korea, the United States and specifically, USFK, should seize this opportunity to adjust its command structure to accommodate a change in operational control of ROK forces, as well as establish an operational plan to respond to a potential refugee crisis. As General B.B. Bell, Commander, UNC/CFC/USFK, stated, "there would be no time to make changes in our command

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<sup>29</sup> Don Kirk, "N. Korean Defectors Face New Challenges on Journey South," *Christian Science Monitor* 97, no. 24 (29 December 2004): 7.



structure, while crisis escalates. We must organize ourselves so we have unity in our chain of command from armistice to crisis escalation and into war, should war break out.”<sup>30</sup>

Since China is a member of the UN Security Council, it would be more inclined to work for an international organization, such as the UNC, rather than solely under a U.S. led effort.<sup>31</sup> A parallel command structure could be ideal to respond to a refugee crisis on the Korean peninsula. Relief efforts could be divided into geographic area of operations with China being responsible for refugees heading across the Yalu River, and a combined U.S.-ROK effort on the DMZ and in the Yellow and East Seas. The U.S.-ROK effort could resemble a current CFC command structure where a ROK led land component commander and United States led maritime component commander could work under the Commander, UNC. Information and military intelligence, specifically relating to humanitarian operations could then be shared to ensure analysis of any situation is transparent, miscommunication is greatly minimized, and proper supplies and equipment are quickly and efficiently disseminated.

There would also be positive second and third order effects from this type of framework. A UNC led effort would renew and promote cooperation amongst all nations to support the ROK should it be attacked by North Korea, and would lay the groundwork for post-conflict stability and reconstruction efforts. Additionally, this effort would improve cooperation between the United States, ROK, China, and Japan in order to promote a future-oriented regional security cooperation - the desired roadmap to post-unification of the Korean peninsula.<sup>32</sup> Regional security cooperation is the desired goal of the region’s countries and this type of planning could promote coordination prior to a refugee crisis and on the other extreme, conflict on the peninsula.

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<sup>30</sup> “UN Command Should Retain Key Supporting Role: Bell,” *Hankyoreh*, 18 January 2007, [http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english\\_edition/e\\_international/185071.html](http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_international/185071.html) (accessed 21 April 2007).

<sup>31</sup> “China on UN Peacekeeping Operations,” *People’s Daily Online*, 21 October 1999, [http://english.people.com.cn/english/199910/21/enc\\_19991021001064\\_TopNews.html](http://english.people.com.cn/english/199910/21/enc_19991021001064_TopNews.html) (accessed 7 May 2007).

<sup>32</sup> Jonathan D. Pollack and Young Koo Cha, *A New Alliance for the Next Century* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 1995), 72.

Disadvantages of a UNC led effort are minimal. The UN organization is very bureaucratic, but the most difficult part of establishing a military command structure and staff is already complete. The process can simply begin by the Commander, UNC, and his administrative superior, the U.S. Secretary of State, recommending to the UN Security Council that this mission be added to its mandate. Once this political decision is made, the UNC can establish a horizontal command and control structure, specifically for this operational plan, for nations to contribute as much or as little as they desire. Additionally, since Commander, USFK, performs the role of Commander, UNC, some may view a UNC led effort to be indistinguishable from a United States led effort. Despite these perceptions, the advantages of a highly capable and experienced UNC, would outweigh any disadvantages. A coordinating body within the UNC, such as a MIG, a Department of Defense concept, will be necessary for early and close coordination with IGO/NGOs.

#### **THE MULTINATIONAL INTERAGENCY GROUP**

*Close cooperation with our interagency and international partners is an important element of success . . . Our Joint Interagency Coordination Group within the headquarters is an example of this new wave of integration.*

General John P. Abizaid, USA

*Statement to House Armed Services Committee, 3 March 2004*

History books are flooded with many hard learned lessons that highlight poor coordination between lead agencies, militaries and affected nations. Typically, IGO/NGOs are not brought into the military planning cycle early enough and are often asked for inputs after military decisions have been made. Additionally, military units have stumbled across NGOs in the field where multiple, uncoordinated projects are concentrated in one area, while other areas have gone unaided. In Rwanda, different views, motivations, and goals about humanitarian assistance operations in the

country plagued the mission from the beginning and put military leaders and IGO/NGOs at odds.<sup>33</sup> There needs to be a permanent linkage between the military and NGOs prior to a crisis.

United States Joint Forces Command (USJFCOM) produced a command and control model in an effort to harness the multinational military and civilian coordination called the MIG.<sup>34</sup> This group bridges the gap between civilian and military planning for potential crisis. It is based on the Joint Interagency Coordination Group concept, which is a full-time, multifunctional advisory element that could be permanently assigned to the UNC/USFK or the USPACOM commander's staff to facilitate information sharing throughout the interagency community.<sup>35</sup> Through collaboration, it would provide a means to integrate campaign planning efforts on the peninsula at the strategic and operational levels with South Korean NGOs and IGOs, country ambassadors and other multinational and multilateral bodies within the region. The staff would be comprised of mostly civilian personnel with strong interagency experience who formulate, articulate, advocate, and implement the commander's policies, priorities, programs, and procedures for interagency engagement. A MIG permanently incorporated into UNC/USFK Headquarters on the peninsula would be advantageous in many different ways over one assigned to USPACOM in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. There are large numbers of South Korean NGOs, IGOs, and foreign embassies, along with the headquarters for UNC/USFK already residing in Seoul. USJFCOM is currently conducting an exercise to validate this concept.<sup>36</sup> This concept has not been tested in real-life situations, but implementation of this type of coordinating body should not wait.

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<sup>33</sup> Lange, 106-122.

<sup>34</sup> U.S. Joint Forces Command, "Multinational Interagency Group," [http://www.jfcom.mil/about/fact\\_ciacg.htm](http://www.jfcom.mil/about/fact_ciacg.htm) (accessed April 22, 2007).

<sup>35</sup> U.S. Joint Forces Command. *Commander's Handbook for the Joint Interagency Coordination Group*, Joint Publication (JP) (Suffolk, VA: U.S. Joint Forces Command, 1 March 2007), vi.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Major implications exist for USPACOM since they are the primary force providers for the United States in the Pacific and would be intimately involved with the UNC/USFK in the creation of an operational plan. USPACOM oversight and involvement will be critical in two aspects: becoming a bridge between participating nations in the region and elsewhere; and identifying military forces, bases, and civilian facilities to support the effort.

Planning for a potential North Korean refugee crisis will require military planners to think out of the box. Planners will have to make an assumption that a refugee crisis might also entail a military response to counter weapons of mass destruction, collapse of the regime or unification of the peninsula through conflict. As a result, FHA operations would not be the main effort. Military units in the region would be tasked with other missions, and nearby bases would be in maximum use without and lacking the capacity to accommodate the mass migration of refugees. The pre-positioning of food and other supplies will be essential because of time constraints, since the plight of the refugees could worsen by the day. Refugee camps in the region would need to be established separately. Passenger ferries from South Korea, Japan and China would need to be contracted ahead of time, and coast guard vessels from other nations should participate. While communications with the ROK and other coalition forces already exist, integrating the Chinese will be challenging and will require early coordination.

The ROK contingency plan to respond to refugees and mass migration, Chungmoo 3300, will need to be shared with USPACOM, and depending on its content, may serve as a foundation to build an operational plan involving an international response. This planning effort should be transparent to all participating countries, militaries, and agencies and should represent a horizontal command and control structure where each nation can contribute as much or as little as they want.

## **CONCLUSION**

Should a catastrophe occur in North Korea, millions of North Korean refugees would scatter throughout Northeast Asia. As a consequence, an operational plan to respond to such a crisis must be established. This potential crisis is international in nature and requires diplomatic, military and economic cooperation at all levels. Regional politics, the possibility of miscalculation between military powers that converge on the peninsula, and the difficulty in ascertaining the magnitude of such a crisis will make the mission uniquely challenging. However, a response to this crisis should be based on capitalizing on over a half a century's worth of experience in the U.S.-ROK Combined Forces Command and through cooperation with other countries, particularly China. The United Nations Command in Korea, with a standing Multinational Interagency Group, should lead this daunting effort. It is the only organization that can garner international support and overcome mistrust and animosities that impedes military coordination within the region. With significant resources committed to places like Iraq, there will be a natural tendency for the United States to yield this planning process to another country. The decision to not lead will have enormous financial and strategic implications. But the decision to act with a small investment now will help shape the future political, economic and military landscape in Northeast Asia. It is in the nation's interest to establish an operational level framework to mitigate the challenges of being overwhelmed when the crisis is at hand.

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